342 used mainly as the sleeping room of the grown-
574 up children or the young married couple, if they are staying with the parents. Also, the guests on their first visit are invited to stay in this room. Since the people seldom go to this room, its floor is exemplarily clean. Often it is covered with a home-woven rug.

356 Cleaning the rooms and keeping them in order has almost a ritual significance for the Votes. The floors and the wall benches were formerly scrubbed every Saturday. But before great holidays, especially before Easter, the cleaning was extended also to the walls and even the ceilings. Therefore the walls of the Votic rooms, even though they were not white-washed or covered with wallpaper, were amazingly clean. In addition to the washing and scrubbing, the old people remember another special method for cleaning which was employed before festivals and weddings. This was the scraping of the walls. The walls of the rooms which had no stove were first swept clean of soot and then scraped still whiter with a special iron tool or with big knives. For Christmas, Easter and other great holidays and for weddings, the floors were covered with
[764] straw. When there was a corpse in the house, fir branches were strewn on the floors.

● 584 Customs, superstitions. The Votic wedding customs in earlier times were considerably different from what they are today. Porthan tells that at the end of the eighteenth century the Votic boys did their wooing as they wished, without the knowledge of their or the
[582] girls' parents. The usual age for marriage was 15 years for the boys and 12-15 for the girls. The young people informed the priest of their

584 plans; the priest bethrothed them and then notified their parents. Oftentimes the latter disliked the marriage, sometimes to such degree that they were at loggerheads with the young people but the priest usually managed finally to reconcile them. Then the bride's mother grasped the bride's hair, while the bridegroom cut it with a knife. The bride's mother handed the hair over to the bridegroom, saying: "Take her hair as well as her head, you are her
585 master and she is your slave." After the relatives were summoned, the bridal pair was sent to the Russian church to wed. When they came home, the bridegroom's sister or some other woman relative received the bride, led her into the room and left her standing at the right side of the door, while she herself stood at the left side. The guests sat at the table, but the bride had to stand and curtsey all the time until the sun went down. Then the bride was led out by the same woman. If the bride was very tired and nearly fainting, then somebody supported her from the other side. She was led to the wedding bed in another room. The bridegroom, accompanied by three or four men, came and asked her whether there was space also for him in the bed. The woman answered in the negative, but after bargaining and haggling the bridegroom was, for a few rubles, permitted to go to bed. After an hour or two the young couple were called out of the room and then the dance began, accompanied by a bagpipe. Finally the young couple, both of them holding onto a plate on which there was a glass of vodka, offered vodka to the people; the people drank while lying on the floor and rewarded the couple with money. The wedding celebrations lasted for a couple of days. When the guests left, they presented the bride with shirts and hens, everyone according to his means.

000 hens, everyone according to his means.

●584 In more recent years (at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries) the wooing and wedding customs of the Votes have completely changed. Young people usually get more closely acquainted with each other spending nights together. One pair or several pairs go to an outbuilding to converse and to sleep. A boy spends one night with one girl, the next with another girl, until he finally finds a suitable life companion for himself. This night-spending has certain limits, the crossing of which is considered completely improper. The girls shun a lad who is too aggressive and refuse [883] even to dance with him--a severe punishment in villages where the young people come together every night to dance and play. In some villages one of the young men is elected a kind of social leader; he decides who will spend the night with whom. His decisions must be followed by the boys from his own as well as from other villages.

When a young man has decided to marry and has received a girl's consent, he tells his parents and asks his uncle or godfather to make the official wooing. The latter goes to the girl's home and asks, in figurative language, to buy an apple tree. If the girl's parents agree, then the betrothal of the young people takes place on the following day. For this the girl summons her relatives, and the go-between brings vodka from the tavern. The most important ceremony at the betrothal is the giving of the kerchief: the bride takes a kerchief from a chest, gives it to her mother, who in turn gives it to the bridegroom for a ruble. The latter wipes his and his future mother-in-law's lips with it and kisses her. They they all drink and the bridegroom is

584 recognized by his in-laws as their relative. The village girls now begin clattering the plank used for closing the oven and chase the bridegroom out of the room. Then they go walking in the village, singing and clattering the plank so that everyone knows what is going on. Before the go-between leaves, a horse collar is thrown on his neck. He neighs like a horse, runs out of the front hall and throws the collar down. The bride sings a weeping song to her father, mother and relatives and finally to all the village people. After that everybody, except the bridegroom, goes home.

Some days later the youths of the village come to clean the wedding house. The boys clean the walls of soot and dirt, while the girls wash the floors.

585 On the morning of the wedding the mother wakes the bride with a weeping song. The bride, standing in front of the door and wearing a wreath made of paper flowers in her head, awaits the arrival of the bridegroom's party. Her sister throws herself on her neck and they together sing a weeping song. Then the bride three times puts her wreath on the head of her best girl friend, but each time it is given back. This is repeated with each girl who is there. When the bridegroom arrives, the bride's godfather takes a whip, icon and pillow and leads the bride to the wedding room. There the bridegroom's relatives have to put money into a wooden bowl, and only when there is enough of it are they allowed to sit down at the table. After the bride's mother has distributed her gifts to the relatives, they go to the church. On the next day they go to the house of the bridegroom where the young couple is received with special ceremonies. The bride's mother distributes here also presents, and the young wife sweeps the floor.